

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OUTREACH - WOLFVILLE, OCTOBER 3rd

Members of the Executive met with APNS members in Wolfville on October 3rd. Here is a summary of the topics discussed. The Executive would like to thank Eileen Donahoe and the other APNS members who helped organize this meeting. Thank you also to those who attended and shared their views.

Negative things about being a psychologist in a rural area

Professional isolation: This was agreed by all but it is recognized that private practitioners in "the city" can also experience isolation.

Defining roles in the face of demands of the system:

Sometimes health services are asking for things that the psychologist is not comfortable providing, e.g., consults in ER when there is no doctor to do a medical clearance. The discussion also identified this as perhaps being the ideal situation and that it is not always the case that psychologists see people who have a medical "clearance". We discussed meeting this demand by identifying what the psychologist can do in these circumstances (when the physician is not available in ER) re: symptom management (e.g., self-calming and/or relaxation strategies) or crisis intervention; perhaps helping to stabilize the patient and providing the patient and family with support.

Competence: Psychologists must see clients with problems in which they are not a specialist. The discussion centred around the same idea as above, i.e., doing what you can do well (and are competent to do) and giving some thought to the "generalist" model of practice, beyond which referral to the "specialist" is the only recourse.

Dual relationships: Discussion reflected the nature of the reality of smaller communities and need for support networks throughout the region for consultation and peer support. It was recognized as a common problem when people come from any larger centre to a smaller centre.

APNS participation on committees

Difficulty with participating on APNS committees because of the distance to drive and timings of meetings. Discussion centred on the reality of costs to individuals versus to the association, balanced with the need to have representation across the province. Telephone meetings, rotating meetings, longer meeting times ("to make the trip worthwhile"), and email were methods mentioned to help eliminate the barrier to participation.

Best things about being a psychologist in a rural area

Being part of a community:

Discussion about the fact most psychologists know each other and the context of the problems they are helping to solve.

What are the main things that the APNS can do that would be helpful for you?

- Educating others about the psychologist's role.
- Educating managers that building budgets to hire psychologist consultants would be good idea. In that way teams can build on skills.

- Advocacy.
- Promotion of the profession internally and externally.

What things would you like to see happen here in the Annapolis Valley? e.g., social networking; consultation group, speakers etc.

- Public Education.
- Workshops held here rather than Halifax.
- Opportunity to sponsor AGM.
- Social activities.
- Study groups.

Are you interested in organizing something for Psychology Month in February?

People would like to have a social event. Details to be worked out. This and any outcome of the meeting was discussed as providing a template or model for other groups of psychologists to formalize relationships with the association and among themselves.

Other

The observation was made that NSBEP (since 2005) has had 35 complaints against psychologists. Many of these involve competency issues (improper diagnosis and improper procedures) and boundaries (dual roles). There was some discussion on how to best educate others so that these things do not happen. Various points raised were:

- In Alberta, Dr. Jean Pettifor developed a checklist booklet so that psychologist could audit their own practice.
Action: It was decided to pass this checklist on to NSBEP for their information.
 - We discussed the need for requiring a certain number of hours of ethics education as part of CE Requirement.
 - We discussed and decided to request that NSBEP summarize types of violations and disseminate this information to psychologists in the province as an educational tool.
- Discussion followed about how to help candidates going into solo private practice (through mentoring, peer support, newsletter teaching segments, and checklists - as above).